

# Delta Working Landscapes

## Abstract

Currently much attention and effort is focused on restoring the natural habitats of the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, which were prevalent prior to reclamation. Many of these restoration projects require that lands be taken out of agricultural production, which could have negative implications to the Delta's economy and culture. However, other projects, often referred to as 'Working Landscapes', enable farmland throughout the Delta to be utilized as valuable wildlife habitat by providing opportunities for private landowners to combine environmental stewardship with current agricultural practices.

The Delta Protection Commission's Working Landscapes projects set out to improve the environmental quality of existing landscapes in the Delta; coordinate programs with local farmers to understand the social, economical, environmental and governmental policy hurdles and incentives to perform conservation practices; and communicate to farmers the advantages of implementing wildlife friendly agricultural practices.

## Method

Planting vegetative buffers along irrigation ditch banks and hedgerow plantings to improve water quality by reducing runoff of pesticides and sediment, and farming approaches which can benefit wildlife and other environmental aspects will be studied. Additionally, farms ideal for wildlife friendly agriculture, such as corn, rice, and wheat fields will be identified and considered for seasonal flooding and restoration projects to increase winter wildlife habitats. Projects such as these can also support compatible recreational opportunities with economic benefits, such as duck clubs and wildlife viewing.

While these projects are still in their infancy, Delta Working Landscapes has set two primary goals: 1) provide private landowners with knowledge and assistance to enable compatibility on their lands between wildlife and agricultural operations; and 2) help landowners adapt to the State's demand for conservation and restoration while still sustaining the Delta's agricultural economy.

## Delta Protection Commission

